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Patriots all around: inter/national timing, round numbers, and the politics of commemorative critique

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Introduction

Does it matter *when* we say what we say? Rather than focusing on a particular commemoration, I want to draw attention to the broader issue of what we do when we discuss centenaries and other ‘big’ anniversaries. I contend that regardless of whether we congratulate or criticize, such occasions remain captured within a hegemonic politics of commemoration. By choosing the anniversaries of internationally important events, especially *round* anniversaries (10th, 25th, 50th, centenary), even the staunchest critics of the state and states’ system affirm *state-centric timing orders* by rendering particular happenings as ‘historical events’ and imbuing them with *cosmopolitical* value. Even when we take anniversaries as an opportunity to develop withering critiques of the statist status quo, as many in this special issue do,¹ we still reproduce nation-states, their relations, and the states system as the real and central elements of global politics. In terms of timing, centenary critics are patriots and internationalists too.

To defend this position, the article shows how calendrical commemoration reproduces a statist and internationalist (henceforth, “inter/national”) timing regime.² First, I briefly present a theory of timing, which shows how shared conceptions of time spring from and depend upon particular standards of orientation and control. I then use timing to highlight the inner workings and implications of *any* discussion indexed to inter/national calendars. In the second section, I summarize links between hegemonic timing and the modern inter/national. In the third, I explicate the cosmopolitical importance of calendars, showing how modern dating systems constitute ‘historical time’, privilege particular legacies, produce collective identities at the national-state and international levels, and amplify the importance of round

¹ E.g. see Auchter, Barder, McDonald, Omelicheva, and Subotic, this issue.

² I use inter/national to avoid the cumbersome phrase ‘statist and internationalist’. ‘Inter/national’ also builds on critiques of the state-centrism of traditional IR by highlighting how calendars undergird the modern states system.

numbers. Fourth, I discuss the ontopolitics of these timing practices and identify five consequences of inter/nationally-timed critique. To conclude, I suggest alternative calendars supportive of a more thoroughgoing challenge to our hegemonic, inter/national politics of commemoration.

Timing and dating

In order to unpack what fans and critics alike are *doing* when they observe anniversaries, it helps to think about *timing* instead of time. As discussed elsewhere,³ this seemingly simple shift from noun to verb houses important theoretical implications for understanding temporal phenomena. Nouns are naturally “substantial” and thus easily objectified and reified.⁴ Through repetition they can take on a life of their own, which separates them from human ideas and effort. Verbs, on the other hand, keep our attention trained on actions and practices undertaken by social agents. This is especially the case in time studies, where even the most incisive analyses of time and temporality⁵ have the effect of “thingifying” or naturalizing time and temporality as a dimension, force, or some entity separate from human activity. So although time scholars often acknowledge that humans construct and experience time differently, this way of discussing it reproduces a time of the universe or some other objective and independent entity superseding temporal experience.

This sort of reification of time abets the intuitive appeal of anniversary critiques. It makes it seem as if 2018 “really is” approaching,⁶ so the only option for critically-minded scholars is to take *it* – the seemingly natural turning of the year – as an occasion to challenge hegemonic interpretations of what 2017 or its big events mean. A theory of timing clarifies just what we accomplish in such instances.

³ Andrew R. Hom, “Angst Springs Eternal: Dangerous Times and the Dangers of Timing the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 168–70; Andrew R. Hom, “Reckoning Ruin: International Relations and the Problem of Time” (Book manuscript in preparation, Edinburgh, 2017) chp. 1.

⁴ Norbert Elias, *An Essay on Time* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), 54.

⁵ e.g. Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Ty Solomon, “Time and Subjectivity in World Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 671–81; Christopher McIntosh, “Theory across Time: The Privileging of Time-Less Theory in International Relations,” *International Theory* 7, no. 03 (November 2015): 464–500; Tim Stevens, *Cyber Security and the Politics of Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶ McIntosh, “Theory across Time,” 470. Reification is a matter of practice and degree; e.g. Omelicheva (2018, this issue) notes that Russian legislators miscalculated the date of Moscow’s November 1612 liberation when translating it from Julian to Gregorian calendars.

“Timing” here includes much more than our idiomatic references to coincidences – e.g. the way we exclaim “nice timing!” when running into a friend unexpectedly. It is also much more than the *kairotic* idea of a “moment” of opportunity or a sense of *when* to take a specific action.⁷ Rather, *pace* the sociologist Norbert Elias,⁸ timing refers to a robust and synoptic vision constructed and enacted by social agents. It includes ideas about which changes matter, what they mean, how they fit together, and how they might unfold. It focuses not only on the occurrence of a particular change but also on the more substantial continuum or continua of changes in which it is embedded. Timing is a basic means of grappling with the intrinsic differences and dynamics of life, a way of synthesizing multiple changes into a coherent, animated whole. This synthesis helps us orient ourselves, establish relations, and exert self-control as well as control over others.⁹

Reflective of our “basic capacity for establishing relationships,”¹⁰ timing proceeds by reference to some master organizing principle or *timing standard*. This standard instructs how to *integrate* and *co-ordinate* change continua so they unfold in ways conducive to our overarching objective. Timing thus always involves subordination inasmuch as we choose one timing standard instead of others and use it to gather together and arrange change continua that would otherwise proceed differently. Timing thus always expresses a *will to time* not unlike Nietzsche’s will to power, understood as a “vision of order” or “an ultimate explanatory principle for whatever there might be” enabling action and imagining our environment as a meaningful “unity and totality.”¹¹ Every timing scheme therefore reflects particular interests and purposes.¹²

Moving from initial efforts to synthesize unruly changes to a widely deployed timing regime marks a shift from *active* to *passive* timing. Active timing involves self-conscious reflection about the timing standard and negotiations how to use it to synthesize change continua. In passive timing, the standard and its consequent modes of synthesis have been widely

⁷ Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*; Tom Lundborg, *Politics of the Event: Time, Movement, Becoming* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Stevens, *Cyber Security*, 71–72.

⁸ Elias, *An Essay on Time*.

⁹ As discussed below and implied in Subotic’s (2018) contribution to this issue, this brings together calendrical commemoration and issues of identity formation and in/security.

¹⁰ Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 38.

¹¹ Ulrik Enemark Petersen, “Breathing Nietzsche’s Air: New Reflections on Morgenthau’s Concepts of Power and Human Nature,” *Alternatives* 24, no. 1 (1999): 94–95; Hom, “Reckoning Ruin” chp. 1.

¹² Andrew R. Hom, “Timing Is Everything: Toward a Better Understanding of Time and International Politics” (Article manuscript, Edinburgh, 2017), 10.

accepted and/or institutionalized and, as a result, are rarely acknowledged as such. In passive timing, we do not think much about what we are doing (or what we might do otherwise), we simply use a working timing mode to organize our lives. Yet both active and passive timing actualize *political power* by selecting and directing change continua into particular pathways. Active timing actualizes a *will to time* by putting into practice a particular vision of how processes unfold. Passive timing embeds that will within routinized practices and structural constraints, reinforcing its apparent intuitiveness and inhibiting alternatives.¹³ Here reflection on different timing possibilities is necessary but not sufficient to challenge the dominant, passive, timing regime.

By invoking co-ordination and a timing standard, it may seem as if my theory of timing refers primarily to enumerated “times” like the standardized clock and the Gregorian calendar. While timing does pertain to these stalwarts, it also accommodates more flexible, narrative modes like history¹⁴ and national autobiographies¹⁵ that privilege some changes over others and “emplot” a continuum according to some theme. And when successful and iterative, both types of timing – enumerative and narrative – can produce discursive references to “time” or “temporality”. This is how timing explains “time” *per se*, as *nothing more* than our symbolic reference to underlying timing activities. “Time” is not a dimension, force, or thing; it is an artifact of social timing efforts and their linguistic descriptors. Turning this point around, every instance of “time” or temporality indicates a particular, underlying timing practice. Time utterances thus mark an opportunity to unpack synthetic order by identifying its overarching standard; its modes of synthesis, orientation, and control; and what “will” it actualizes. Where calendars and commemoration are concerned, we can ask what timing regime produces and is reinforced by a particular anniversary.

Timing the nation-state

Various scholars have sketched important links between time and the rise of the nation-state.¹⁶ States arose as solutions to the “secular humanist moment,”¹⁷ when “the temporal”

¹³ Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 41–43; Hom, “Timing Is Everything,” 7–10.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, ed. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

¹⁵ Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁶ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 19; Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, 105; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised (London: Verso, 1991); Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 45–46; Paulina Ochoa Espejo, *The Time of Popular Sovereignty: Process and the Democratic State* (University

realm became no longer merely a sinful interlude between biblical Fall and Redemption, but itself a meaningful, self-contained span – a “meanwhile” in which “coincidence” becomes “contemporaneity” and a collective identity can emerge.¹⁸ Importantly, this moment retained the religious view of time *per se* as a problem – either vulnerable to Fortuna or a natural source of discord and chaos.¹⁹ Without God’s promise to deliver humanity “in the fullness of time” and redeem time itself with eternity, modern states alone must “solve [...] problems most fundamentally, of temporality” – usually understood as ensuring survival and keeping chaos at bay.²⁰

Viable states signaled their mastery over time by shaping the ever-more precise, standardized clocks and the Gregorian calendar to their purposes. France’s Constitution *Nationale* announced “a new world-era with the Year One, starting from the abolition of the *ancien regime* and the proclamation of the Republic on 22 September 1792.”²¹ Accurate mass-produced clocks and Americanized almanacs played key roles in establishing a distinctly “nationalist idiom”²² in the young United States (US). Von Moltke complained that five conflicting time zones were “debris left over from the era of a splintered Germany”, which “should be removed now that we are an empire.”²³ And Stalin proposed the *nepreryvka*, or “uninterrupted” work week, in order to maximize production capabilities with a distinctly Soviet calendar.²⁴

These modifications in timing societal life helped subjects of Louis XVI become republican French citizens, colonial settlers united Americans, Prussians and Saxons German, and

Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2011); Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

¹⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

¹⁹ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Hom, “Angst Springs Eternal,” 170–73.

²⁰ Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 4–5. I develop a fuller account of the problem of time in Hom, “Reckoning Ruin” Introduction.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 193. The French also attempted, unsuccessfully, to institute the *decade*, a ten-day week reflecting their metric system Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 28–35.

²² Allen, *A Republic in Time*, 1–3.

²³ Quoted in Ian Bartky, *One Time Fits All: The Campaigns for Global Uniformity* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 123; see Andrew R. Hom, “Hegemonic Metronome: The Ascendancy of Western Standard Time,” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 1163.

²⁴ Zerubavel, *Seven Day Circle*, 35–43. Because it disrupted family leisure time, this was one of his least successful reforms. Omelicheva (2018, this issue) covers another instance of calendrical reform in Russia.

Russians Soviet comrades.²⁵ National timing was clearly a matter of sovereignty with international political consequences. When the US purchased Alaska from Russia, the change in sovereignty also meant the territory's calendar switched from eastern/Julian to western/Gregorian dating – a swing of twelve days.²⁶ When the United Kingdom (UK) proposed Greenwich as the prime meridian of twenty-four global time zones constituting the 'international' as a single global space,²⁷ Americans called it an affront to their sovereignty that imposed "English time" on the US.²⁸ The French initially insisted the US and the UK adopt France's own national treasure, the metric system.²⁹

Calendar cosmopolis

Why did setting the time matter so much? Because the "mastery of time" was understood to mark a key instance of human discovery and further to provide "an index of the progress of civilization".³⁰ To understand why and how these instruments help states to time their identities,³¹ it helps to look more closely at how modern clocks and calendars function in social life.

The modern, Gregorian calendar emerged from medieval ecclesiastical debates where attempts to "compute" an exact date – even for purely practical purposes – risked heresy if they contradicted papal dating schemes. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, historians began to sidestep such dangers by focusing less on exact dates and more on qualitative "fluctuation[s] of triumphs and tribulations between the unmastered past and the uncertain future."³² In other words, history and historiography provided a way to orient and contextualize present experience in a *chronology* without resorting to thorny theological issues of time reckoning. Although computation disputes eventually quieted down, the modern calendar henceforth co-mingled dates with narrative and collective memory, enumerating "natural cycles" while charting "high points of human endeavor" as "landmarks

²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 193.

²⁶ Bartky, *One Time Fits All*, 23–24.

²⁷ On the constitution of the international, see Jens Bartelson, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Hom, "Hegemonic Metronome," 1163.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Allen, *A Republic in Time*, 1–2.

³¹ Andrew R. Hom and Ty Solomon, "Timing, Identity, and Emotion in International Relations," in *Time, Temporality, and Global Politics*, ed. Andrew R. Hom et al. (Bristol, UK: e-International Relations, 2016), 20–37.

³² Arno Borst, *The Ordering of Time: From the Ancient Computus to the Modern Computer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 72.

for historical thought. In short, [it] constituted historical time” as a new way to “form [...] relationships between people.”³³ In the modern calendar, national heroism now evoked a deeper religious and mythological heritage in which “special days and seasons” marked the “interruption” of ordinary life by a deity.³⁴ So although much more secular in *content*, modern calendars functionally recover a mythological and “spasmodic” quality of timing enabling remembered “heroes” to “live years of magical life” in a much smaller calendrical span.³⁵

Our modern calendar thereby supports the nation-state. Its abstract, comparatively precise, and qualitatively flexible dating scheme readily accommodate inter/nationalist imaginaries, enshrining some idiographic events as historical and worthy of commemoration while marginalizing others. 1776 and 1792 become years ‘one’ of the American and French republics; 1 September 2004, 7/7, and 26 November 2008 become dates of Russian, British, and Indian resilience impelling the Global War on Terror; and 11:00 on 11 November marks the end of the Great War between the great powers of early twentieth-century international politics.³⁶

Familiarity with such inter/national dates may obscure the capacity of those dates to re-time political life and collective memory. They signify “formation stories” (McCourt, this issue) that synthesize, orient, and direct human collectives as nation-states and members of an international system. This is why claims about ‘year zero’ or the ‘dawn of a new era’ are so important to inter/national politics. They designate an “axial moment”, “the upsurge of the act [...] that makes possible the whole enterprise and therefore also its beginning in time.”³⁷ They also legitimate an “official system of dating” and “perennialization resulting from the series of ritual reenactments”, evoking our long history of “rites, feasts, and public ceremonies.”³⁸ Once again, although secular in content, perennialization taps into a timing power as old as myth. Because they locate human experiences on a grid inspired by celestial motion, calendars bridge “lived and universal time”, applying an inter/national frame of reference to “tell us in the proper sense of the term *where* we are in the vast reaches of

³³ *Ibid.*, 105, 73.

³⁴ Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; see also Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*.

³⁶ On the ‘greatness’ of the Great War, see Auchter (2018, this issue).

³⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, New edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 105, 139. O’Driscoll and McDonald (this issue) analyze other axial moments based on tragedies.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

history, what our place is in the infinite succession of human beings who have lived and of things that have happened.”³⁹

Perennialized timing also gives political authorities “anchor points” to which they can refer and call “ahead of time”⁴⁰ the civic observances constituting ‘us’ as a political collective and providing a comprehensive grid for daily life and inter/national consciousness, the latter of which is unimaginable without 1648, 1776, 1914, 1989, 9/11. Such dates outline a “symbolic universe” ordering experience and linking individuals “with their predecessors and their successors in a meaningful totality”, helps “transcend the finitude of individual existence”, and constitutes human experience as “*belonging* to a meaningful universe”.⁴¹ The full effect is to “transpose” some empirical grouping “onto a cosmic plan” that, once again, keeps “chaos at bay.”⁴² Observing these dates re-institutionalizes the inter/national every *time*.

The cosmopolitics of round numbers

Because they combine elements of progression and recurrence (years accumulate via the cycling of days, weeks, and months), calendars also possess an epistemological potency related to our preference round numbers. They count off or measure all other time from axial moments, with round quantities taking precedence. France might commemorate its revolution each year, but “*the* major commemoration”⁴³ of living memory occurred in 1993 because it marked the 200th anniversary, which is more significant than the 199th or 201st. Likewise, Americans born in 1976 are ‘bicentennial babies’;⁴⁴ those born in 1975 or ’77 received no such patriotic designations.⁴⁵

Although every anniversary perennializes the national biography a little bit more and helps divide daily and historical life into “sectors that are apprehended routinely,”⁴⁶ round anniversaries epitomize the comforting *regularity* of rationalized public time in two ways.

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, 105.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴¹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 103.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 103, also 42.

⁴³ François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 120.

⁴⁴ E.g. see Steele’s (2018) introduction to this issue.

⁴⁵ Elsewhere, musical albums go gold and platinum upon selling 500,000 and 1M copies, respectively. In ice hockey it is a career-defining achievement to score 50 goals in 50 games, 49 in 49 counts as ‘falling just short’.

⁴⁶ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 24; Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 14.

First, roundness aids approximations and the mitigation of the existential flux. Roundness refers to integers ending in one or more zeros. Between two numbers of equivalent magnitude, the one ending in more zeros is rounder: 1000 CE is rounder than 997 CE but also than 1002 CE.⁴⁷ Roundness also applies to mid-point integers like 5 – halfway between zero integers in a base-10 numbering system.⁴⁸ Round numbers are thus able to act as approximations of more precise and more taxing (in terms of information processing) values. We easily gloss 9.7 as ‘around’ 10; ‘a thousand’ frequently subsumes more exact values like 997 or 1013. Round numbers enable all sorts of *ad hoc* negotiations in daily life; the larger their magnitude, the wider the range of precise values they accommodate. Five approximates a range of +/- two, otherwise we would round up to ten or down to zero. But 1000 might approximate a range as wide as +/- 499.

So it goes with timing. Consider two answers to the question, ‘what time is it?’: 1) 12:57:39; or 2) ‘about one o’clock’. For most purposes, the latter is more useful because a) it requires less information processing, and; b) it subsumes a wider range of more precise times.⁴⁹ Over multiple iterations, it also imbues life with regularity: ‘I eat lunch at 12:30 each day’ glosses the fact that one day I eat at 12:29:59, the next 12:31:08, and the next 12:34:43, thus lending my lunches a sense of habit and routine.

Second, round shorthands can influence timing in a more robust way via institutionalized calendars. What begins as approximation “thickens” and “hardens” through repeated use, transforming *ad hocery* into an anchor point for daily and inter/national life.⁵⁰ Inasmuch as they sit in-between and subsume more cumbersome values, thereby enabling habituation, round numbers partake of the modern *episteme*’s fancy for means, norms, and regularity. Along with helping a dispersed collection of people to cohere as a group, the normative value of a regulating average complemented modern time-keeping entrepreneurs’ efforts to sell a “mean noon” to various locales that would not actually see the sun directly overhead at that moment.⁵¹ Although we do not think explicitly about any of this anymore, calendrical dates also make use of this regulating norm, collecting distant places with a timing *standard* that

⁴⁷ Scott Ferson et al., “Natural Language of Uncertainty,” *International Journal of Approximate Reasoning* 57 (February 1, 2015): 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 31, 20.

⁵⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 59.

⁵¹ See Michael O’Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

fixes, more or less arbitrarily when the clock and calendar turn over and when the “social timing-unit” in question begins and ends.⁵²

Round anniversaries also reinforce inter/national calendars’ links to a more venerable symbolic tradition. Consider the modern century, a round time unit we take entirely for granted as a ‘big’ anniversary. Yet this interpretation is only *around* 450 years old. It arose from religious conflicts. In 1559, Protestant historians known as the Magdeburg Centuriators established a “new form of great year: the century”, and assigned this “regular, clear interval” to each Gospel author in order to contest Papal dating.⁵³ Although intended as a technical stop-gap, by designating the century a “great year” Centuriators tapped into an ancient cosmopolitics – the idea that human order reflects natural and cosmic truths.⁵⁴

Traditionally, “great year” refers to a “perfect number” when “time [is] coming *round* or circling” back to some default position.⁵⁵ For Plato, it marked the return of “wandering [celestial] bodies” to their original alignment.⁵⁶ Great years also evoke the sense of “eternal return” so important to the western philosophical tradition, for coming around to default helps time symbolize wholeness⁵⁷ as well as the sense of another turn of the cosmic gears.

The century’s great year heritage lends modern calendars a cosmopolitical edge. By combining progression with recurrence and precise dating with historical chronology, they chart an “unrepeatable succession of numbered years” whose practical utility is to “symbolically represent the unrepeatable succession of social and natural events” and thus “serve as a means of orientation in the great continuum of change.”⁵⁸ Add to this the convention of ranking anniversaries by roundness and the calendar also imposes a large-scale, regular pattern on social life linking inter/national politics to the cosmos. Round anniversaries cast the inter/national as both seminal and symbolically eternal – the impulse power behind the gears of existence. As a nexus of cosmopolitical, epistemological, and

⁵² Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 47.

⁵³ Borst, *Ordering of Time*, 103.

⁵⁴ See Hom, “Hegemonic Metronome,” 1150–53.

⁵⁵ Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 184 *emph. added*.

⁵⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 182.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵⁸ Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 7.

practical timing power, it is hard to imagine a more decisive symbol of the nation-state's mastery of temporal flux and chaos.

In these ways, modern calendars quite literally time the nation-state and states system. They comprehend and synchronize diverse individuals and their activities;⁵⁹ they help resolve discrepancies and ambiguities;⁶⁰ thus enabling a unified identity to unfold within their smooth-running account of time itself.⁶¹ Moreover, their qualitative flexibility allows inter/national chronologies to punctuate this clean quotidian flow with commemorative reminders of heroic deeds done, existential threats subdued, depravations endured, and crises overcome, reproducing the entity as that which confirms reality and prevents its breakdown (e.g. see Omelicheva, this issue).

This is an *ontopolitical* process that privileges a particular interpretation of partial data as reality itself by “universalize[ing] the specific and naturalize[ing] the contingent.”⁶² Social order by an inter/national calendar works by “dominant accounts of specific situations” and “fundamental presumptions that establish the possibilities” for apprehending and assessing reality.⁶³ Through repeated observances and especially through round anniversaries, it makes the time of the calendar seem real and unassailable. The state calendar renders national time “absolute” and “true”, *something* which “of itself, and from its own nature, flows equally without relation to anything external.”⁶⁴ Internationally perennialized dates accomplish the same effect one level up, stitching together atomized territories as members of a system, society, or community.

The ontopolitics of calendrical commemoration

We can now answer more fully the question animating this article: what do we actually do when we acknowledge an important event on its round anniversary? On such occasions there

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁰ Bartky, *One Time Fits All*, 2.

⁶¹ Elias, *An Essay on Time*, 45–46; Hom and Solomon, “Timing, Identity, and Emotion in International Relations,” 25–32; Hom, “Timing Is Everything,” 18–20.

⁶² David Campbell, “Beyond Choice: The Onto-Politics of Critique,” *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 128, doi:10.1177/0047117805050068.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Newton, quoted in Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 11. Calendars are more ontopolitical than our standardized clocks: years/months/days reflect celestial motion, whereas hours/minutes/seconds are thought more artificial cf. Tim Stevens, “Governing the Time of the World,” in *Time, Temporality, and Global Politics*, ed. Andrew R. Hom et al. (Bristol, UK: e-International Relations, 2016). See Subotic (2018, this issue) for a discussion of round anniversaries and ontological security.

are important differences between those who valorize and those who dissent – recalling 9/11 as a day when “we” were attacked simply for “our way of life”⁶⁵ is not the same as exploring its structural drivers. Yet in both instances, the inter/national calendar provides the *occasion* – ‘the reason’ and ‘the time at which’ it is appropriate for us to either speak triumph or tribulation, to laud or loathe, to proclaim or declaim. In the words of one great nationalist-poet, both approaches “let the nation get in our way.”⁶⁶

Both approaches further reaffirm states’ authority to time their inhabitants as inter/national citizens. Regardless of the content of commemoration, indexing it to national holidays confirms a hegemonic timing regime. Round anniversaries strengthen this process by positioning the inter/national as the cosmopolitical source of great years and thereby the natural order of existence. Even when we challenge the nation-state on its own holidays or anniversaries, we still institutionalize or pass on those dates as politically more important than all others and as the practical anchors of our annual routines of work, leisure, collective memory, and inter/national identity. This “crystallizes” the inter/national timing grid, making it ever more “plausible” and “massive” – something “over and beyond” individuals that confronts them “as an external and coercive fact.”⁶⁷ More succinctly, we contribute to a passive regime expressive of an *inter/national will to time* and bound up with all sorts of structural incentives and constraints – from work, leisure, and family opportunities; to normative associations about timeliness, morality, and good citizenship;⁶⁸ to respect for dates that reflect specific political identities and ideologies. The complete ontopolitical success of this regime resolves when it becomes entirely uncontroversial to refer to inter/national calendars as examples of “modern time *givers*” that “*acquire* and maintain the *correct* time”⁶⁹ rather than *producing* and *instituting* a contestable mode of synthesis. In terms of timing and commemoration, using inter/national dates makes inter/nationalists of us all.

⁶⁵ “A DAY OF TERROR; Bush’s Remarks to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks,” *The New York Times*, September 12, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/12/us/a-day-of-terror-bush-s-remarks-to-the-nation-on-the-terrorist-attacks.html>.

⁶⁶ Gordon Downie et al., *Fireworks* (Phantom Power (Fontana Universal), 1998).

⁶⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 58–49, 154.

⁶⁸ O’Malley, *Keeping Watch*, 1–55.

⁶⁹ Bartky, *One Time Fits All*, xiii *emph. added*.

Five consequences of temporal patriotism

Inter/national timing has five consequences:

1. *It subordinates other moments and experiences.* The ‘birth’ of sovereign states in 1648 obscures 1647 and ’49; 1913 is a mere prelude to the Great War;⁷⁰ barrels more ink has been spilt on 1945 than 1946; and the Y2K millennialism of 2000 was forgotten in the wake of 9/11. Inter/national timing silences politics in other times and thus buttresses deliberate efforts by states to set the rhythm of political life in one way and not another by constructing happenings as ‘national events’ elevated over other phenomena. Even when lambasting these events, critics reaffirm their political import and status as *the* punctuations requiring our attention.
2. *It reinforces an elitist symbolic hierarchy.* Inter/nationally-timed critique does not admit small or fleeting events – a single atrocity or some other micropolitical act⁷¹ – as worthy of attention. Stalin was said to distinguish between the tragedy of a single death and the statistic of a million. Except for political elites, inter/national calendars are metronomes set to Stalinist statistics: the wholesale slaughter of the Great War, the Greatest Generation of WWII, the fall of the Berlin Wall. These drown out smaller-scaled but no less political events: public lynchings in the American South, domestic and sexual violence, and everyday resistance and collaboration. They also inhibit us from seeing the global in the local and vice versa.
3. *It encourages cognitive and aesthetic attachment to order and routine.* It suggests that worthwhile experiences follow a regularized schedule. For example, it bids us to wait until ‘*the* major’ commemorative occasion to say something important about the past. The current special issue might have to work harder to provide a compelling rationale – and could not be called “Centenary International” – if it were pitched in 2013 or ’18, even though little about the Great War will likely change within this span.⁷² Thus

⁷⁰ Although see Auchter (2018, this issue) for a discussion of how the Great War has been overshadowed by other wars in American collective memory, most notably WWII.

⁷¹ See Ty Solomon and Brent J. Steele, “Micro-Moves in International Relations Theory,” *European Journal of International Relations*, March 7, 2016, 1354066116634442, doi:10.1177/1354066116634442.

⁷² Similarly, in 2009 my graduate home, Aberystwyth International Politics (‘the world’s first’, see McCourt, this issue), was accused by frenemies of staging a centenary-style celebration prematurely, on its 90th birthday.

do we buttress a timing scheme based on routine and regularity, pacifying bodies politic and stabilizing their interactions. Calendrical timing is an exercise in Gramscian hegemony – most citizens do not notice the timing choices they embody every day because these choices imbue life with a sense of order and security, yet over countless iterations these choices also co-opt citizens in an inter/national ontopolitics of the status quo.

4. *It privileges an “eventful” temporality.*⁷³ We focus attention on discrete happenings with clean beginnings and endings, reinforcing chronologies of heroic deeds and masking ongoing, dynamic processes. Structural inequalities and, increasingly, political violence do not so much start and stop as emerge, fizzle, and return. For example, calendrical timing complements traditional notions of military victory and decisive event. For example, 2 September’s VJ Day highlights the discrete moment when Japan signed surrender documents aboard the USS Missouri. By contrast, the global war on terror may have a conventionalized beginning in 9/11 but it is unlikely to end at all, much less to result in a decisive victory. Instead we are left to commemorate the assassination of Osama bin-Laden, the “end” of major combat operations in Iraq, and the last withdrawal of US troops from Iraq some eight years later (nearly a round decade!). Inter/national calendars have few options for timing a forever war.

5. *Together these consequences re-valorize the ability of inter/national actors to time civic and political life.* They order individuals’ relationship to the state and states’ relations with each other in a particular and rigid way, constituting some agents as members of the state and states system, leaving others (most) on the margins. Commemorating the Great War recalls particular states as Great Powers but leaves most of the world out of the story of the First World War.

Conclusion: alternative calendars of critique

Deep links between inter/national timing regimes and modern habits of commemoration leave critics of the state and international system in a quandary. We cannot ignore the importance of dissent on occasions when others call forth heroic chronologies and the

⁷³ Lundborg, *Politics of the Event*; McIntosh, “Theory across Time,” 489–95; Stevens, *Cyber Security*, 40–41.

temporal status quo of international relations. Yet this article has found patriotism and internationalism formally embedded in our habits of critique. Dissent-by-calendar still submits to the timing regime of its target. What, then, can reflexive critique do differently to resist inter/national timing orders?

We need better resources to challenge the ontopolitical closures achieved by institutionalized calendars. As a first step, I conclude by sketching four alternative calendars that might re-*activate* the timing question in political commemoration. These alternatives correspond roughly to the first four consequences of inter/nationalist timing just discussed.

1. *Commemorate other dates*

We can retrofit inter/national calendars by commemorating other dates to inscribe well-known events in a different chronological and narrative arc. Perennialize 1915 or 1918 instead of 1914 or '17 and move from focusing on the Great War itself to its role in genocide (Barder, this issue) and global pandemic (Youde, this issue). Observe 1946 instead of 1945 and shift from victory in Europe to victors and vanquished alike crippled by war. Commemorate 12 September 2001, after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks but before an official narrative resolved, and recover the uncertainty and diverging interpretations about “what just happened.”⁷⁴

2. *A micropolitical calendar*

We can revise inter/national chronologies more thoroughly by constructing calendars of micropolitical events not normally attributed inter/national relevance. For one possible example, many police forces and domestic violence support services highlight increased incidents during the winter holidays.⁷⁵ This phenomenon results in part from economic stressors. However, the very ability of the state to call a national *holy* day, when many businesses and public spaces close, contributes to this spike: “During the holidays, people are home together more [...] In families where there is

⁷⁴ Lundborg, *Politics of the Event*. This option depends on the dates and ‘historical’ content chosen and is thus not immune to inter/national cooptation, as shown by Omelicheva’s discussion of Russian dating adjustments (2018, this issue).

⁷⁵ E.g. Police Scotland, see <<http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/crime/police-launch-domestic-abuse-crackdown-across-edinburgh-1-4319980>>; see also <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/31/christmas-domestic-violence-court-manchester>> and <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35096683>>.

violence present that means more opportunity for violence.”⁷⁶ To add insult to injury, the calendrical significance of the holiday encourages delayed or no reporting: “A lot of women will grin and bear it, try to keep the peace so their children don’t have to spend holidays in a shelter”.⁷⁷ Hotline calls spike as soon as the holiday is over.

Rather than allowing 25 December to read exclusively as Christmas Day, we can revise this common calendar space in a slight but important way. Instead of this:

23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27 Bank Holiday
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Figure 1: Standard calendar for 2016 holiday season in the UK

A micropolitical calendar could read as follows:

23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27 Bank Holiday
		Domestic Violence Spike	Domestic Violence Spike	
<<< Domestic violence peak period >>> <i>Domestic abuse is never acceptable. Don't turn a blind eye – speak up, reach out, get help. You are not alone!</i> (Support hotline: 000-000-0000)				

Figure 2: Micropolitical calendar for 2016 holiday season in the UK

This revision is far from Christmas cheery. But it recovers the fact that while domestic violence typically connotes violence within the home, inter/national calendars inflect the timetable of abuse. There is little holy about inter/nationally-mandated holidays for those who keep silent so that their children might experience the wonder of ‘the season’. Acknowledging this cruel, state-mandated irony and placing resources for those who experience abuse directly on the common calendar is one small way to mitigate an annual, holy tragedy.

⁷⁶ <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/domestic-violence-and-the-holidays-expert-says-calls-to-hotline-decrease-when-victims-try-to-keep-the-peace/>>

⁷⁷ <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/domestic-violence-and-the-holidays-expert-says-calls-to-hotline-decrease-when-victims-try-to-keep-the-peace/>>.

3. *A different mode of synthesis: Process-oriented calendars*

We can also construct calendars without smaller temporal divisions like days and weeks in order to open up alternative chronologies too easily obscured by standard timing units. This removes barriers to perennializing and reflecting on long-term *processes* – income distribution and wealth inequality, the ‘glocal’ diffusion of firearms, voter enfranchisement and suppression, for example. 2017 will mark the 70th birthday of the world’s deadliest small arm, the AK-47. Currently, there are more than 75M in circulation around the world. Why not a calendar commemorating the unholy-day of the AK-47’s ‘birth’, joined by monthly markers for distribution ‘milestones’ – e.g. the provisioning of the Soviet military and each million distributed to other locales, or the months when manufacture hit 25M, 50M, and 75M weapons. Why not replace ‘31 December’ at the end of the calendar with ‘another 200,000-400,000 people killed by small arms’?⁷⁸

4. *A different timing standard: Planet calendar*

Cutting even more coarsely, we can develop a calendar for the planet instead of any particular political entity or system. Instead of numeric computability by celestial motion, this would take as its timing standard the thematic story of earth leading up to the “anthropocene”.⁷⁹ In other words, it is less about commemorating alternative dates than setting a different dating scheme and scale altogether. The planet calendar might chart long-term carbon dioxide levels and ocean temperatures to turn our modern preference for the smooth ‘flow’ of time on its head by foregrounding these factors as stable-cyclical yet punctuated by ice ages – a significant temporal rupture by human standards but a normal component of planetary routines. To further punctuate ideas about quotidian order, a planetary calendar could perennialize major extinction events in order to put the looming sixth mass extinction⁸⁰ in perspective. The Late Devonian extinction, ca. 375M years ago, nearly extinguished the Trilobite; the End Permian or

⁷⁸ See <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11714558/AK-47-Kalashnikov-The-firearm-which-has-killed-more-people-than-any-other.html>>.

⁷⁹ I take inspiration from the ‘Planet Politics’ manifesto calling for ‘an alternative thought and process’ but focusing only on spatial terms, one of IR’s most dominant categories of thought Anthony Burke et al., “Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 2016, 500.

⁸⁰ John D. Sutter, “Vanishing: The Extinction Crisis Is Far Worse than You Think,” accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2016/12/specials/vanishing/>.

“great dying”, ca. 250M years ago, killed off 96% of species on earth; and the End Triassic came ca. 200M years ago.⁸¹ Thanks to the power of round numbers, we can ‘celebrate’ their anniversaries *every year for the foreseeable future* without violating precepts of temporal proximity, but in a way that precludes such anniversaries receding from view. This would encourage the sense of a planetary (rather than global, international, or national) now requiring very different symbols of collective identity than those offered by inter/national calendars afford. If global ecological collapse throws up the urgent need for new ideas about *where* we are,⁸² then it also requires a different sense of *when* we are.

These alternatives are roughly sketched. The point is not to replace inter/national timing regimes in one fell swoop but rather to begin to think about how we might time and remember politics differently. Critiquing the state and international system on their own calendars is an important practice of resistance but it challenges collective memory without upsetting political timing – we choose what to say but not when to speak. Bemoan your relationship on your anniversary and you also confirm your marriage. Criticize the state or states system on a statist timetable and we still confirm inter/national politics. A more thoroughgoing cosmo- and onto-political challenge to the politics of commemoration must also be *chronopolitical* by defying dominant, passive, inter/national timing regimes.

⁸¹ Viviane Richter, “The Big Five Mass Extinctions,” *Cosmos Magazine*, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://cosmosmagazine.com/palaeontology/big-five-extinctions>.

⁸² Burke et al., “Planet Politics,” 500.